

I Claim:

1. A tension device for use with a self-retracting lifeline including a drum, comprising:
 - a) a lifeline having a retracting end, an intermediate portion, and a connecting end, the retracting end being operatively connected to the drum, the connecting end being releasably connectable to a user, the lifeline including slack proximate the intermediate portion; and
 - b) an elastic member interconnecting the retracting end and the connecting end, the elastic member providing tension on the lifeline and preventing the drum from retracting the lifeline when the connecting end of the lifeline rebounds in an upward direction during a fall.
2. The tension device of claim 1, further comprising a sleeve in which the intermediate portion and the elastic member are contained.
3. The tension device of claim 1, wherein the slack in the lifeline is created by the elastic member.
4. The tension device of claim 1, further comprising a shock absorber interconnecting the retracting end and the connecting end proximate the intermediate portion and the elastic member, wherein the slack in the lifeline is created by the shock absorber.
5. The tension device of claim 4, wherein the shock absorber includes a first portion and a second portion, the first portion and the second portion separating to absorb shock as the slack in the lifeline is reduced during a fall.
6. The tension device of claim 1, wherein the elastic member has an elasticity such that the tension on the lifeline is greater than an upward force on the elastic member from the rebounding connecting end during a fall.
7. A self-retracting lifeline having a tension device, comprising:
 - a) a lifeline having a retracting end, an intermediate portion, and a connecting end, the connecting end being releasably connectable to a user, the lifeline including slack proximate the intermediate portion;

b) a drum, the retracting end of the lifeline being operatively connected to the drum and being wound about the drum, the drum being rotatable to pay out and retract the lifeline;

c) a brake assembly engaging the drum and preventing the drum from rotating during a fall thereby preventing the drum from paying out the lifeline; and

d) an elastic member interconnecting the retracting end and the connecting end, the elastic member providing tension on the lifeline thereby preventing the brake assembly from releasing the drum and preventing the drum from retracting the lifeline when the connecting end of the lifeline rebounds in an upward direction during a fall.

8. The self-retracting lifeline of claim 7, wherein slack in the lifeline is created by the elastic member.

9. The self-retracting lifeline of claim 7, further comprising a shock absorber interconnecting the retracting end and the connecting end proximate the intermediate portion and the elastic member, wherein the slack in the lifeline is created by the shock absorber.

10. The self-retracting lifeline of claim 9, wherein the shock absorber includes a first portion and a second portion, the first portion and the second portion separating to absorb shock as the slack in the lifeline is reduced during a fall.

11. The self-retracting lifeline of claim 7, wherein the elastic member has an elasticity such that the tension on the lifeline is greater than an upward force on the elastic member from the rebounding connecting end during a fall.

12. A tension device for use with a self-retracting lifeline including a drum, comprising:

a) a lifeline having a retracting end, an intermediate portion, and a connecting end, the retracting end being operatively connected to the drum, the connecting end being releasably connectable to a user; and

b) means for providing tension on the lifeline interconnecting the retracting end and the connecting end and preventing the drum from retracting the lifeline when the connecting end of the lifeline rebounds in an upward direction during a fall.

13. The tension device of claim 12, wherein the lifeline includes slack proximate the intermediate portion created by the means for providing tension.

14. The tension device of claim 12, wherein the means for providing tension is an elastic member.

15. The tension device of claim 14, further comprising a shock absorber interconnecting the retracting end and the connecting end proximate the intermediate portion and the elastic member, wherein the lifeline includes slack proximate the intermediate portion created by the shock absorber.

16. The tension device of claim 15, wherein the shock absorber includes a first portion and a second portion, the first portion and the second portion separating to absorb shock as the slack in the lifeline is reduced during a fall.

17. A tension device for use with a self-retracting lifeline including a drum, comprising:

- a) a lifeline having a retracting end, an intermediate portion, and a connecting end, the retracting end being operatively connected to the drum, the connecting end being releasably connectable to a user, the lifeline including slack proximate the intermediate portion;

- b) an elastic member interconnecting the retracting end and the connecting end; and

- c) a shock absorber interconnecting the retracting end and the connecting end proximate the intermediate portion and the elastic member, the shock absorber including a first portion and a second portion, the first portion and the second portion separating to absorb shock as the slack in the lifeline is reduced during a fall, and the elastic member providing tension on the lifeline and preventing the drum from retracting the lifeline when the connecting end of the lifeline rebounds in an upward direction during a fall.

18. The tension device of claim 17, wherein the slack in the lifeline is created by the shock absorber.

19. The tension device of claim 17, further comprising a sleeve in which the intermediate portion of the lifeline, the elastic member, and the shock absorber are contained.

20. The tension device of claim 17, wherein the elastic member has an elasticity such that the tension on the lifeline is greater than an upward force on the elastic member from the rebounding connecting end during a fall.